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KHPA Proposes Better Management of Mental Health Drugs

Bill Would Improve Patient Safety While Saving Money

(TOPEKA) – The Kansas Health Policy Authority requested introduction of a bill Monday, Feb. 2, that would save the state money and protect mental health patients in the state’s Medicaid system by allowing better management and closer scrutiny of mental health drug prescriptions.

The bill, which was introduced in the Senate Ways and Means Committee, would repeal an existing law that prohibits mental health drugs from being managed in the same way as other prescriptions.

“The lack of any kind of management system for mental health drugs in our Medicaid program has created serious safety concerns for many of our beneficiaries,” said Kansas Medicaid Director Dr. Andrew Allison. “It’s also one of the big factors driving up the cost of Medicaid in Kansas.”

Allison noted that KHPA’s recent [Medicaid Transformation review of pharmacy services](#) found more than 200 children under age 18 who’d been prescribed two or more atypical antipsychotic medications simultaneously. It also found 214 children under 18 who’d been prescribed five or more psychotropic medications within a 90-day period. The review also found that the cost of prescription drugs in the Medicaid program rose 12 percent from FY 2007 to FY 2008, and that the cost of mental health drugs accounted for about one third of that growth.

The KHPA Board recently authorized forming a Mental Health Prescription Drug Advisory Committee to develop guidelines for prescribing mental health drugs in the state’s MediKan program. The legislation being proposed today would allow KHPA to extend the same kind of protection and oversight to Medicaid. The advisory committee will be composed of mental health professionals who will recommend standards for dispensing mental health drugs, including requirements for prior authorization and evaluation of drugs based on their clinical use to support more cost-effective purchasing. KHPA estimates this proposal would save Kansas \$2million (all funds) in FY 2010.

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